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NOFORN

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SUBJECT: TURKS REQUEST U.S. TAKE TOUGH LINE WITH BARZANI ON
PKK, KIRKUK

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

1. (C/NF) Summary: MFA requests that U.S. principals take a tough line with KRG President Masoud Barzani on the PKK and Kurdish expansionism, especially in Kirkuk but also in Ninewah. Additionally, the Turks hope we will publicize that this occurred. End summary.

2. (C/NF) MFA Director General for the Middle East Oguz Celikkol called in PolMilCouns Oct. 24 to request that senior U.S. leaders forcefully address the PKK and Kurdish expansionism -- particularly in Kirkuk but also in Ninewah -- with visiting KRG President Barzani. Celikkol emphasized that he was making this request on instructions from the Minister. Additionally, he requested that we not only take a tough line with Barzani, but brief it to the press after the fact.

3. (C/NF) Celikkol handed us a four-page document (in Turkish) of "objectionable and inflammatory" statements Barzani has reportedly made about Turkey over the past year. He noted that the document had only been compiled for GOT internal use, but in light of Barzani's impending meetings with the President and other senior U.S. officials in Washington he wanted us to have it. (NOTE: We are working on a translation and will forward it to EUR/SE. END NOTE.)

4. (C/NF) On Kurdish expansionism, Celikkol averred that Barzani's actions -- in particular in Kirkuk and Mosul -- are being interpreted both inside Iraq and among its neighbors as steps against the territorial integrity of Iraq and toward Kurdish separatism. Celikkol said that Assyrian leaders in Iraq have complained to the Turks about Kurdish pressure to give up their homes on the plains of Ninewah in favor of Kurds moving into the area. Turkey is concerned that Barzani is seeking to include large chunks of Ninewah province -- as well as Kirkuk -- under Kurdish control. He hoped the United States would deliver a particularly strong message on these issues.

5. (C/NF) Citing that the U.S. and Turkey share the goal of a united Iraq -- and also citing improved U.S.-Turkey cooperation on Iraq issues -- Celikkol emphasized not only the urgency of delivering a tough message to Barzani but also making this known publicly. He asserted that doing so would send a strong message to the Turkish people that the U.S. supports Turkey and the territorial integrity of Iraq.

6. (C/NF) PolMilCouns responded that we would report Turkey's request to Washington, adding that preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity and the need to take measures against the PKK were USG policies and would likely be raised with Barzani.

7. (C/NF) COMMENT: Given widespread suspicion in Turkey about Kurdish ambitions for an independent state, GOT nervousness about the Barzani visit is understandable. Many Turks will see Barzani's reception at the White House as evidence of USG support for these ambitions. Therefore, even before our meeting with Celikkol, Embassy PAO requested Oct. 24 that the R Bureau's Rapid Response Unit arrange a briefing for the Washington-based Turkish press in Washington on the Barzani visit as soon as possible after the event. END COMMENT.
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